


MEMORANDUM

March 31, 2016

TO: Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst 

SUBJECT: **Pew Charitable Trust – Montgomery County Participation in Results First Initiative**

Presenters for this session:

Gary Vanlandingham, Director, Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative
Uma Ahluwalia, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

At this session, the Committee will learn about the Pew Charitable Trust – MacArthur Foundation *Results First Initiative*. The Initiative works with states and counties to “develop the tools policymakers need to identify and fund effective programs that yield high returns on investment.” It allows jurisdictions to:

- Direct resources toward cost-effective programs shown to work.
- Inform the planning and development of new programs.
- Restructure contracting and grant processes to prioritize evidenced-based programs.
- Ensure that programs are delivered with fidelity to practices most likely to produce results.

There are four main steps in the Result First process:

1. Create an inventory of currently funded programs.
2. Review programs that work.
3. Conduct benefit-cost analysis to compare programs’ likely return on investment.
4. Use evidence to inform spending and policy decisions.

After initial evaluations and program/budget decisions there must be **implementation oversight** to make sure that programs are being delivered according to their intended design and there must be **outcome monitoring** that regularly reports performance data to make sure programs have the expected results. A Fact Sheet on the Results First Initiative is attached at ©1-5. An excerpt from the 2014 report “Evidence-Based Policymaking, a guide for effective government” is attached at ©6-19.

The Results First Initiative is currently working with 21 states. Pew Charitable Trust is working to expand its efforts in counties and is interested in working in Montgomery County with the Department of Health and Human Services.

At a county level, the Results First Initiative has been working with four California counties: Fresno, Kern, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz to realign their criminal justice programming in order to reduce recidivism and increase effective programs. Changes to California law have given counties responsibility for more inmates and for inmates with longer sentences which provides additional incentive for making sure effective programs that reduce costs are in place. While each county is different, Kern County noted that they used their program inventory and evidence review to identify areas where services could be consolidated or coordinated more effectively to reduce recidivism. Santa Cruz County is using the information it has gained from cost-benefit analysis to establish new contracting requirements and to prioritize a portion of funding for programs that the analysis identified as most likely to reduce recidivism and generate cost savings.

As a part of the presentation and discussion, the Committee may be interested in discussing some of the following issues/questions:

- What is the process for entering into an agreement to participate in Results First?
- How would Pew Charitable Trust and Montgomery County decide on the policy/program area(s) that would be the focus of Results First?
- When might the process begin?
- What type of technical assistance has Pew Charitable Trust been providing to other counties?
- Are there any financial requirements for participating in Results First?
- How have local research organizations and/or universities been a part of Results First in other jurisdictions?
- How have non-government program providers (most often non-profit organizations) been involved in the process of benefit-cost analysis and discussion of program effectiveness?
- Results First has been helping jurisdictions review existing programs to determine whether they are effective, and if not, to potentially realign funding. If the County agrees to participate in Results First, how should it make decisions regarding proposals for new programming?



The Pew Charitable Trusts / Research & Analysis / The
Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative

FACT SHEET

The Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative

July 31, 2015

Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative

The decisions that state and local governments make today about how to invest their limited resources will dramatically shape our nation's future. The Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, a project of The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, works with states and localities to develop the tools policymakers need to identify and fund effective programs that yield high returns on investment. Using innovative and customizable methods, Results First partners learn to:

- **Create an inventory of currently funded programs.**
- **Review which programs work.**
- **Conduct benefit-cost analysis to compare programs' likely return on investment.**
- **Use evidence to inform spending and policy decisions.**

Taken together, these efforts have helped leaders improve public outcomes, reduce costs, and increase accountability by ensuring that resources are directed toward effective, cost-beneficial approaches.

Four steps in the Results First process

1. Create an inventory of currently funded programs. A comprehensive program list enables policymakers to identify wasteful spending and support approaches that produce tangible results. Results First partners begin their work by developing a detailed program inventory that includes information on design, costs, capacity, and populations served.

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A state like Mississippi will always have needs that outpace our available resources, and having data to accurately predict what we can get out of our finite resources makes a tremendous difference. Results First has allowed us to take a step back, evaluate the programs that we are funding in a particular policy area, and then see if those programs are actually evidence-based.

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Mississippi state Representative **Toby Barker** (R-District 102)

2. Review which programs work. Rigorous research studies have tested the effectiveness of many public programs and identified those that are most likely to generate results. In order to expand the use of these evidence-based approaches, partners use information gleaned from their program inventory and from national evaluations to categorize how well programs achieve their desired outcomes. The Results First Clearinghouse Database, an online collection of information from eight

national clearinghouses that conduct independent, transparent, systematic, and rigorous reviews of available research, helps state and local partners quickly review available research and assess the rated effectiveness of their programs.

3. Conduct benefit-cost analysis to compare programs' likely return on investment. Information on how the cost of a new opportunity compares with its short- and long-term effects is critically important in any major budget or policy decision, yet these data are often in short supply. Thanks to intensive technical assistance, Results First partners collect cost information on their programs and services to customize a benefit-cost model that estimates a return on investment for each assessed program. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy developed this model, which includes modules on criminal and juvenile justice, pre-K through 12th-grade education, child welfare, mental health, substance abuse, and public health.

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The beauty of the Results First approach is that it is very open and transparent. Everything that we fund must meet a high standard, and providers receive the tools they need to meet that standard. There are no surprises.

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Executive Deputy Commissioner **Michael C. Green**, New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

4. Use evidence to inform spending and policy decisions. Information gleaned from the previous steps enables governments to make more informed policy and budget decisions, such as reducing or eliminating programs that are shown to produce poor outcomes or that lack sufficient evidence of effectiveness, and shifting funds to

alternatives that can achieve better outcomes. Results First staff members help partner states and counties interpret results and develop reports and briefs that explain findings to policymakers.

RESULTS FIRST HELPS NEW MEXICO MAKE EVIDENCE-BASED CHOICES

Since partnering with the Results First Initiative in September 2011, New Mexico has become a leader in using sophisticated benefit-cost analysis to inform policy and budget decisions. Building on the state's strong history of investing in evidence-based programs and measuring their performance, the Results First approach has enabled state policymakers to get a clearer picture of the comparative value of potential taxpayer investments and to direct resources to the most effective programs. "The only way to really [know] if you're getting the value of your resources is to gather information, assess it, and try to determine the outcomes," says state Representative Luciano "Lucky" Varela (D-District 48). "I think the evidence-based approach will give us the information we need to fund the programs that work."

Results First: An approach that works

Since 2011, the Results First Initiative has partnered with states and counties across the country to create tools that help guide investments in proven policies and programs. The Results First approach has helped our partners:

- Systematically analyze data and make decisions based on evidence, rather than anecdote.
- Target funding to evidence-based programs and develop alternatives to ineffective options.
- Transcend partisan gridlock in enacting effective responses to major challenges and opportunities.

- Secure outside funding to support effective interventions.
- Enact legislation to enable evidence-based policymaking.
- Monitor programs' fidelity to their original design and their performance against set targets.

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You never have enough resources to do everything you wish you could. We can make better choices for our community when we use empirical information rather than gut instinct.

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Chief Administrative Officer **Susan Mauriello**, Santa Cruz County, California

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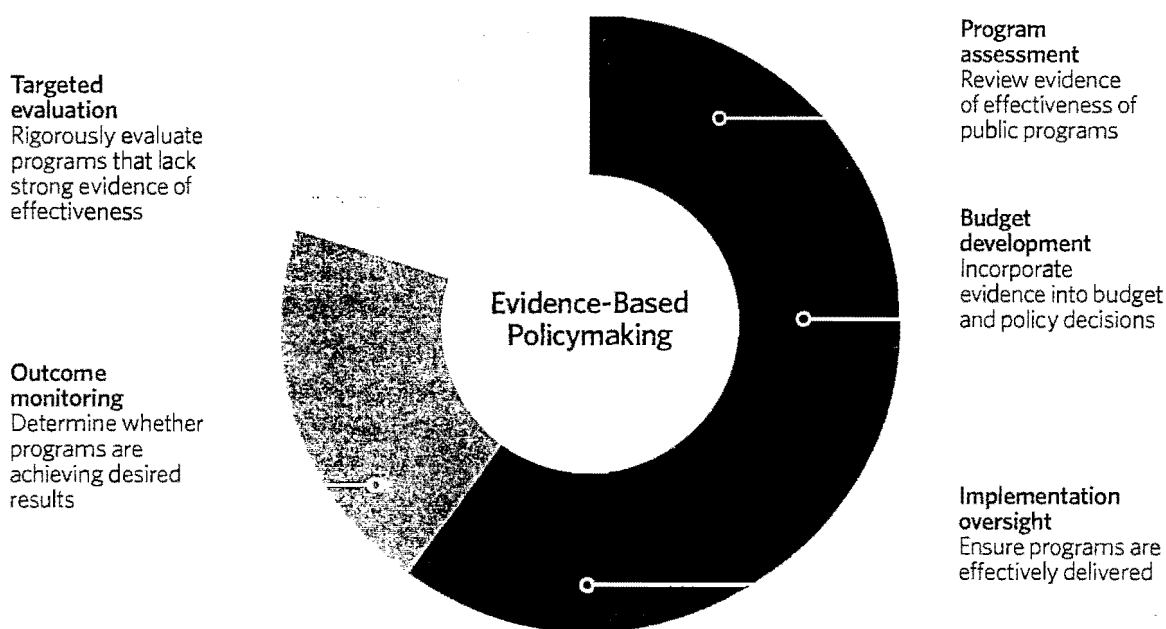
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Key components of evidence-based policymaking

Results First researchers identified five key components that support a system of evidence-based policymaking (see Figure 1). In developing this report, our research found that while many states have put one or more of these in place, none has developed a comprehensive approach across all branches of government. For each of the components, our framework includes specific steps that help to ensure successful implementation. Governments may lack capacity to implement all of the elements at once, but they can still strengthen their use of evidence-based policymaking by focusing on particular features highlighted in this report.

Figure 1
Steps in Evidence-Based Policymaking



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Program assessment. Systematically review available evidence on the effectiveness of public programs

Government leaders should develop an inventory of the programs they currently operate and then assess the available evidence of effectiveness and return on investment for each one. This provides important baseline information that enables government leaders to identify which programs are working and achieving high returns on taxpayer dollars, which need further evaluation, and which are not delivering expected outcomes (see Appendix B: Potential roles in state government).

Develop an inventory of funded programs

Many state and local governments do not have a complete catalog of the programs they fund, which is a necessary starting point for determining which are effective and which are not. Government leaders can require agencies to conduct a census to identify all publicly operated and contracted programs and collect standard information about each, including their funding levels, services delivered, and populations served. To help facilitate this process, governments often find it beneficial to develop a common definition of “program” to provide consistency across agencies.

In 2014, Rhode Island’s Office of Management and Budget worked with the state’s departments of Corrections and Children, Youth, and Families and the judiciary to develop an inventory of 58 state-funded programs intended to reduce recidivism in adult and juvenile justice systems. In its initial report, published in March 2014, the office found that 33 percent of the programs inventoried were not evidence-based, and only two had been recently evaluated to determine whether they were implemented according to research-based standards. As a result of this process, the office recommended additional evaluations to ensure fidelity to these standards.¹²

Categorize programs by their evidence of effectiveness

Policymakers need clear information about the effectiveness of the programs they fund. By requiring agencies to categorize the programs they operate according to the rigor of their evidence of effectiveness, lawmakers and agency leaders can ensure they have access to the information they need to make this determination. A first step is to develop definitions for each category, based on the strength of evidence. For example, some states use “evidence-based programs,” which may be defined as requiring multiple evaluations that use rigorous methods such as randomized controlled trials. A second is “promising programs,” which may include those that have been evaluated and shown effective but through a less rigorous research design. State or local governments can use resources from national clearinghouses or other states in developing these definitions.

Embedding such standards of evidence in statute can increase the likelihood that they will be enforced consistently and endure political changes. In 2012, Washington passed legislation to increase the number of evidence-based children’s mental health, child welfare, and juvenile justice services.¹³ The law has three key requirements:

1. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy and the University of Washington Evidence-Based Practice Institute, in consultation with the Department of Social and Health Services, will publish definitions of “evidence-based,” “research-based,” and “promising practices.” To be considered an evidence-based program, the law requires that the benefits produced outweigh its cost. In addition, the institute and the university will review existing national and international research to identify programs that meet the criteria based on these definitions.
2. The state’s Department of Social and Health Services and the Health Care Authority will complete a baseline assessment of evidence- and research-based practices in child welfare, juvenile rehabilitation, and children’s mental health services. This includes the extent to which currently funded programs meet the standards of evidence, the utilization of those services, and the amount of funding received by each program.
3. The Department of Social and Health Services and the Health Care Authority must report to the governor and Legislature on strategies, timelines, and costs for increasing the use of evidence- and research-based practices.

In 2014, Mississippi passed similar legislation mandating that its Legislative Budget Office and Joint Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review, known as PEER, categorize programs in four state agencies as evidence-based, research-based, promising practices, or other programs and activities with no evidence of effectiveness.¹⁴ The legislation includes definitions of each evidence level to guide the work of the budget office and PEER.

Leveraging National Research Clearinghouses

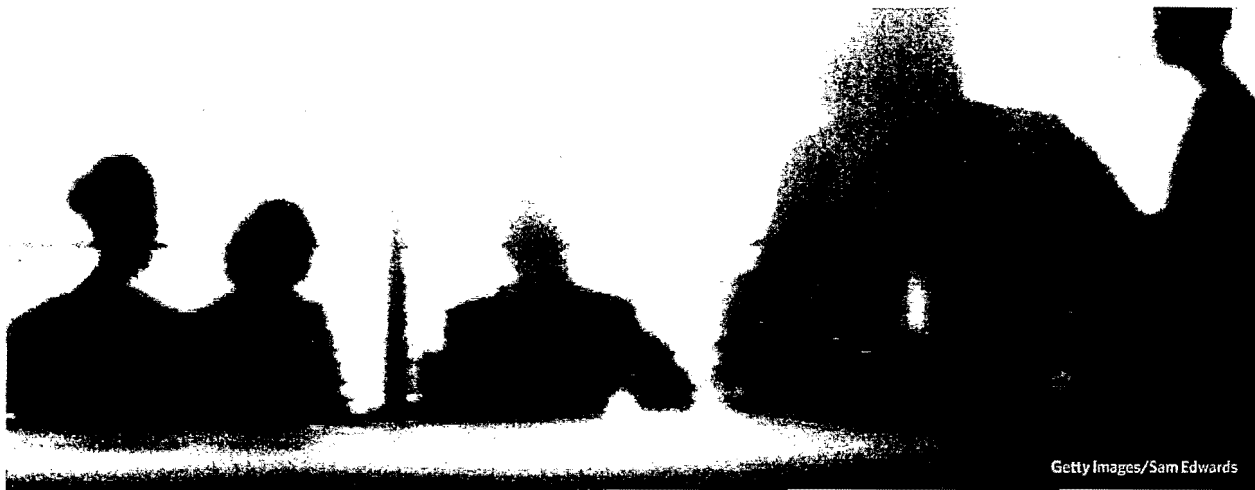
In recent years, several national research clearinghouses have been established that conduct systematic literature reviews to identify effective public programs across a range of policy areas, including adult criminal and juvenile justice, child welfare, mental health, pre-K to higher education, and substance abuse.^{*} Although the clearinghouses use slightly different criteria for evaluating the strength of evidence, most have adopted a tiered structure that allows researchers and policymakers to easily determine the relative effectiveness of each program. For example, the What Works Clearinghouse, an initiative of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, uses a system of recognizable symbols to convey this information: two plusses mean a program has positive effects, while an oval means there is no evidence of an effect on outcomes.[†] The What Works Clearinghouse has rated the impact of approximately 130 education programs on 26 educational outcomes.

Policymakers and agency leaders can use these clearinghouses to compare the programs that their state or locality operates to those the clearinghouses have deemed to be effective. For example, a state might find that only a small percentage of its adult criminal justice programs had nationally recognized evidence of positive outcomes, which would raise questions about whether the remaining programs should continue to receive funding.[‡]

* There are several widely recognized national research clearinghouses, including the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse, the U.S. Department of Justice's CrimeSolutions.gov, Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices, the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare, What Works in Reentry, and the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy.

† What Works Clearinghouse, U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, accessed July 29, 2014, <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/findwhatworks.aspx>.

‡ The Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative recently created a central database that compiles information from eight research clearinghouses to enable policymakers and their staffs to readily identify effective, evidence-based programs in multiple policy areas, including adult criminal justice, juvenile justice, mental health, substance abuse, early education, K-12 education, and child welfare. For more information, please see: <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2014/09/results-first-clearinghouse-database>.



Over the past two fiscal years, five states—Iowa, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York, and Vermont—have used the Results First model to target \$81 million in funding to more effective programs that the model shows will achieve higher returns.

Identify programs' potential return on investment

In addition to knowing whether programs have been rigorously evaluated, it is also important for government leaders to know if investing in them would generate enough benefits to justify their costs. Governments can use cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses to answer this question. These studies calculate the dollar value of the outcomes that different programs achieve and weigh them against the costs. Conducting such analyses requires technical expertise and extensive fiscal and outcome data and may not be practicable for all programs. When feasible, however, this approach enables governments to rank programs by their potential return on investment, providing policymakers with critical information on which alternatives can achieve the greatest returns for constituents.

The Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative is working with 16 states and four counties to implement cost-benefit analysis models that enable policymakers to use this approach in their budget and policy decisions. Results First uses a nationally recognized, peer-reviewed model and a three-step process:

1. Employ the best national research on program outcomes to identify what works, what doesn't, and how effective various alternatives are in achieving policy goals.
2. Apply jurisdiction-specific data to predict the impact each program would achieve.
3. Compare the costs of each program to its projected benefits and produce a report that ranks each alternative by the relative value it would generate for taxpayers.

Over the past two fiscal years, five states—Iowa, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York, and Vermont—have used the Results First model to target \$81 million in funding to more effective programs that the model shows will achieve higher returns.¹⁵

Budget development. Incorporate evidence of program effectiveness into budget and policy decisions, giving funding priority to those that deliver a high return on investment of public funds

For evidence-based policymaking to be successful, governments must systematically use evidence of program effectiveness to inform their processes for making budget and policy decisions. This requires regular communication between researchers, budget staff, and policymakers as well as the development of strong executive and legislative champions. Analytic results must be reported to policymakers in timely and accessible ways.

Integrate program performance information into the budget development process

Executive branch agencies should use performance information when developing their budgets to ensure funds are directed to programs that have strong evidence of effectiveness and away from those that are not delivering results. To accomplish this, agencies can develop output and outcome measures for all major programs and report those metrics in their budget requests. Agencies should develop numerical performance targets that can be used by policymakers to measure progress against key benchmarks and goals. For evidence-based programs, the targets should reflect outcomes predicted by research.

A well-functioning performance measurement system can help governments decide where to pull back on funding as well as where to provide greater support. Connecticut's Result-Based Accountability system has been operating for eight years and has become an important part of the state's appropriations process. When outcome measures showed that the state's \$20 million annual investment in early reading programs was having no positive effect on reading skills, they were first denied funding and later analyzed in-depth to identify potential solutions. The study found that reading specialists, a central element of the initiative, lacked sufficient training to achieve expected results and that funding to support early reading efforts was often used for other purposes. Based on this, the state has turned to other approaches, such as adding reading-related graduation requirements for education degrees and implementing techniques based on a reading program in Norwalk that has had success. "Our reading scores are now creeping up instead of going down," said Representative Diana Urban, co-chair of the Connecticut General Assembly's Select Committee on Children.¹⁶

Present information to policymakers in user-friendly formats that facilitate decision-making

To increase the likelihood that policymakers will use evidence to inform critical budget decisions, complex information must be presented in ways they can readily understand and act on. For any program, policymakers need answers to at least three important questions:

- Is the program working?
- Do its benefits outweigh its costs?
- How does the program compare to alternative programs?

To provide this information, agencies can produce annual rankings that compare programs targeting similar outcomes based on effectiveness, cost, and benefits produced. When practicable, governments can use cost-benefit analyses to calculate a return on investment for each program, providing policymakers with data on how to best allocate resources to achieve each agency's goals.¹⁷ At a minimum, policy staff should compare programs with common goals according to their documented impact on specific outcomes—for example comparing a set of programs that all have as their primary goal reducing child abuse and neglect.

When practicable, contracts and grants should include performance goals that encourage organizations to provide evidence-based programs and to implement those services as designed.

Several states, including Washington, Iowa, and New Mexico, have developed *Consumer Reports*-type analyses, which rank programs by their benefit-to-cost ratios.¹⁸ In 2012, the Iowa Department of Corrections issued a report highlighting the costs and benefits of various criminal justice programs over a 10-year period.¹⁹ The analysis showed that among prison-based programs, cognitive behavioral therapy programs were inexpensive to operate and highly effective in reducing recidivism, returning \$37.70 in benefits for every dollar spent. In contrast, correctional educational programs, although also effective, returned only \$2.91 in benefits per dollar invested.²⁰ As a result, the department is considering expanding its cognitive behavioral therapy programs and plans to reduce other, less effective activities proportionally.

Include relevant studies in budget hearings and committee meetings

Policymakers can use executive and legislative budget hearings and committee meetings as opportunities to discuss key findings from program evaluations, audits, cost-benefit analyses, and other research. Governments can establish procedures requiring research offices to provide relevant reports to budget and policy committees, which should, in turn, be encouraged to consider the findings in their deliberations.

The New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee regularly presents program evaluations, agency performance report cards, and cost-benefit analyses during budget hearings and committee meetings to support its budget and legislative recommendations. In 2013, for example, the committee presented a report in budget hearings showing that reducing recidivism by 10 percent using proven programs could save the state \$8.3 million in prison costs and approximately \$40 million in avoided costs to victims.²¹ The findings, in addition to other analyses, helped inform decisions to allocate \$7.7 million to effective criminal justice programs.

Establish incentives for implementing evidence-based programs and practices

Governments can use grant competitions to encourage adoption or expansion of evidence-based programs. Agencies can also partner with private philanthropies or businesses to scale up promising programs—those that demonstrate the potential to achieve a positive return on investment.

Wisconsin's Treatment Alternatives and Diversion grant program provides funding to counties to implement data-driven alternatives to prosecution and incarceration of criminal offenders with a history of substance abuse. A county is eligible for a grant if, among other criteria, the services provided are consistent with evidence-based practices. Between 2006 and 2013, these grants funded nine county diversion or drug court programs. A recent evaluation found that grant-funded projects averted 231,533 incarceration days for offenders, 57 percent of whom were not convicted of a new crime three years after being discharged from the program.²²

Governments can also develop pay-for-success models and social impact bond agreements, both of which raise capital from private investors or philanthropic organizations to scale up programs that have the potential to achieve better outcomes and save the government money. Although these efforts are still in their infancy, several states, including Massachusetts and New York, are moving forward with plans to provide incentives for data-driven programming.

New York raised \$13.5 million through its social impact bond to support the Center for Employment Opportunities, which provides evidence-based employment services to ex-offenders including job training, transitional employment, and job placement. Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BAML) and Social Finance Inc. raised funding from more than 40 individual and philanthropic investors, which included several BAML clients, as well as foundations, among them the Laura and John Arnold Foundation and the Robin Hood Foundation. The Rockefeller Foundation agreed to guarantee up to 10 percent of the investors' principal. An independent evaluator will determine whether the program is reaching its goals of reducing recidivism and increasing employment.²³ The state will repay investors only if the outcomes outlined in the bond agreement are achieved.

Build performance requirements into grants and contracts

When practicable, contracts and grants should include performance goals that encourage organizations to provide evidence-based programs and to implement those services as designed. To realize the benefits of performance-based contracts, program administrators should work closely with providers and program developers to create measures that accurately gauge performance, while striking a balance between the need for accountability and the importance of continuous quality improvement and increased capacity. These contracts need to be carefully crafted and monitored to protect against unintended consequences, such as creating incentives for providers to take only those clients most likely to succeed and to reject those considered high-risk.

In the early 2000s, the Connecticut Judicial Branch's Support Services Division, which oversees state-run juvenile justice programs, developed a Center for Best Practices to review research on evidence-based interventions and integrate effective strategies into current programs, most of which were contracted out.²⁴ The center determined that several programs were achieving poor outcomes, and the division began working with contractors to identify the aspects of service delivery that yielded desired outcomes and to incorporate those elements into their contracts. Through this process, the division developed a standard report card, which includes performance data and other quality assurance information, that is updated semiannually and is reported to the Legislature each year. Division staff members also meet quarterly with contractors to review performance data, identify areas for improvement, and determine technical assistance needs.²⁵

When properly designed, performance-based contracts can help move agencies away from a fee-for-service model, which pays providers for the amount of services they deliver, toward a system that rewards results. For example, in Tennessee, under more traditional fee-for-service contracting methods, foster care providers that were most successful in finding permanent homes for children could suffer financially because the children no longer needed their services. In contrast, the state's pay-for-success program, which was introduced in 2009, provides contracts that pay more to agencies that achieve permanent placements for children. Over a five-year period, this helped reduce the time children spent in foster care by 235,000 days and saved \$20 million, which has been reinvested to further improve services.²⁶

Implementation oversight. Ensure that programs are effectively delivered and are faithful to their intended design

The quality of program implementation can dramatically affect outcomes: Even the most effectively designed interventions can produce poor results when poorly run. To ensure proper implementation, governments should establish strong monitoring systems that assess all funded programs, including those administered by nongovernmental entities. This monitoring should ensure that evidence-based programs are carried out with fidelity to their design and incorporate the elements that are critical to their effectiveness, and it should include processes that improve quality by using information gathered through monitoring to make adjustments that improve performance.

Too often, program support and oversight is one of the first areas cut when budgets are tight, resulting in inadequate implementation and poor outcomes. To sustain the positive results, policymakers should include funding for support and monitoring in the base budgets of programs. Then, if budgets are reduced, effective services can still be delivered to high-need clients, which is preferable to serving more people ineffectively by poorly implemented programs.

Establish quality standards to govern program implementation

Broad-based implementation standards can promote the consistent delivery of high-quality services by providing baseline requirements for monitoring and oversight. These criteria should also be included in agency contracts to help ensure that providers understand and comply with expectations. Evidence-based programs frequently have detailed implementation manuals that managers can use to set quality standards.

For example, state leaders tasked the Washington State Institute for Public Policy with developing standards to implement evidence-based juvenile justice programs after an evaluation found that sites where the programs were not implemented with fidelity had poor results.²⁷ The standards address four key elements of quality assurance—program oversight, provider development and evaluation, corrective action, and ongoing outcome evaluation—and include protocols for hiring, staff training and assessment, and management and oversight of service delivery. Providers are required to undergo an initial probationary period during which they receive training and feedback. Thereafter they are evaluated annually. The state regularly monitors program completion and recidivism rates for juveniles who receive certain services. The implementation standards are credited with helping the state achieve greater reductions in crime and juvenile arrest rates compared with the national average and a decrease of more than 50 percent in youth held in state institutions.²⁸

Build and maintain capacity for ongoing quality improvement and monitoring of fidelity to program design

Governments can support effective implementation by offering—or partnering with organizations that offer—training, technical assistance, and other services to program providers. They can also offer infrastructure support, including computer systems that facilitate data collection and outcome reporting. Some nationally recognized evidence-based programs also provide training or technical assistance services to assist implementation.

The Evidence-based Prevention and Intervention Support Center, or EPISCenter, provides technical assistance to communities and service providers in Pennsylvania to support the implementation of evidence-based prevention and intervention programs.²⁹ Since 2008, the center has assisted in the establishment of nearly 300 evidence-based programs in more than 120 communities throughout the state.³⁰ The center is a collaborative partnership among the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and Penn State University. It receives funding and support from the commission and from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. Experts from the center provide technical assistance to local staff on implementation, evaluation, and sustainability and help develop the infrastructure to monitor the program for fidelity to its original design. Over time, providers build internal capacity for these operations and many continue to report data to the EPISCenter even after their initial funding has ended. These efforts have been highly beneficial.

Balance program fidelity requirements with local needs

Many evidence-based programs have identified the key service elements that are critical to achieving desired outcomes but they also note that some services may need to be modified for local conditions. Administrators monitoring programs should ensure that key elements are implemented with fidelity while allowing other features

to be adapted to meet community and cultural differences. Administrators, program developers, and service providers should work together to ensure that program adaptations do not negatively affect outcomes.

In 2009, the Oregon Legislature passed a bill to utilize the nationally recognized “Wraparound” system of care for emotionally disturbed and mentally ill children, with statewide programs in place by 2015.³¹ A fundamental part of Oregon Wraparound is fidelity monitoring, overseen by the Oregon Department of Human Services. The National Wraparound Initiative has provided assessment tools to ensure that programs remain faithful to its 10 basic principles. However, administrators may adapt other services to local conditions and needs, which can vary across the state. “The goal is to meet communities where they are so that this is sustainable. Whatever you’re building needs to be part of the community you’re working with. You maintain the fidelity of the model, but ensure that it’s tailored to the community,” says William Baney, director of the Systems of Care Institute, at Portland State University’s Center for Improvement of Child & Family Services, which provides training and systems support to Oregon Wraparound.³²

“ The goal is to meet communities where they are so that this is sustainable. Whatever you’re building needs to be part of the community you’re working with. You maintain the fidelity of the model, but ensure that it’s tailored to the community.”

William Baney, director of the Systems of Care Institute at Portland State University’s Center for Improvement of Child & Family Services

Conduct data-driven reviews to improve program performance

Regularly scheduled data-driven performance management meetings enable agency and state leaders to discuss performance data, develop or refine performance objectives, identify areas for improvement, promote innovative strategies, foster coordination, and hold managers accountable for results.³³ Agencies should hold similar meetings with their staffs and service providers to pinpoint opportunities for improvement and address performance barriers.

This approach was developed by the New York City Police Department and popularized by the city of Baltimore through CitiStat. The CitiStat model allowed Baltimore leaders to focus on performance goals, improve service delivery, and generate \$350 million in savings over a seven-year period, enabling it to reinvest \$54 million in new programming for children.³⁴

Using a similar approach, Maryland StateStat measures statewide performance and tracks key indicators from biweekly agency data, which are analyzed for trends to inform strategies for improvement. Regular meetings are held with the governor, agency heads, and StateStat staff to clarify goals, refine approaches for achieving outcomes, and track performance.³⁵ This use of data has engendered a culture of organizational learning in which program managers and agency leaders discuss challenges and solve problems.

Aligning Existing Services With Key Elements of Evidence-Based Programs

Governments can often improve the outcomes from programs that are not evidence-based by aligning their key characteristics with those that are. For example, a locally developed program for juvenile offenders may be able to improve its results by incorporating features of programs that research shows are highly effective in reducing recidivism.

The Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol, or SPEP, developed by the Peabody Research Institute at Vanderbilt University, provides a standardized measure to determine how closely a particular program conforms to the most effective practices, according to scientific research, in juvenile justice.^{*} The tool assesses programs in four primary areas that research has identified as critical to effectiveness, including the primary service provided, the quantity of service, the quality of delivery, and the risk level of the juveniles served. The tool is currently being implemented in three jurisdictions—Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, and in Iowa and Delaware. They are part of the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Juvenile Justice Reform and Reinvestment Initiative, established to support improvements to current service delivery models.[†] The information gathered through the tool is used by states and localities to improve existing juvenile justice services and align them with evidence-based practices without having to redesign entire service systems. Arizona and North Carolina have also used the SPEP tool to assess the effectiveness of their juvenile justice programs, and initial data show that larger reductions in recidivism correlated with higher SPEP ratings.

"The SPEP tool allows states to look at programs that may not be name brand, but to determine whether they have the common elements that research suggests works," says Mark Lipsey, Ph.D., director of the Peabody Research Institute.[‡] "From a practical standpoint, in some policy areas there are relatively few evidence-based programs; they can be expensive and require significant training to get providers up to speed. We see our approach as complementary with model programs which are also part of our scheme, but it allows states to look at a broader set of programs."

^{*} Peabody Research Institute, "Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol," accessed July 29, 2014, <https://my.vanderbilt.edu/spep>. The protocol was developed by Mark Lipsey, Ph.D., of the Peabody Research Institute, Vanderbilt University.

[†] Shay Bilchik and Kristen Kracke, "How Do You Scale Evidence-Based Programs: A look at OJJDP's Juvenile Justice Reform and Reinvestment Initiative," *Cost-Benefit Knowledge Bank on Criminal Justice*, (Dec. 4, 2013), accessed July 29, 2014, <http://cbkb.org/2013/12/how-do-you-scale-evidence-based-programs-a-look-at-ojjdps-juvenile-justice-reform-and-reinvestment-initiative>.

[‡] Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative interview with Mark Lipsey, director, Peabody Research Institute, Vanderbilt University, Jan. 8, 2014.

Outcome monitoring. Routinely measure and report outcome data to determine whether programs are achieving desired results

Many governments have made significant investments to build and implement performance reporting systems, but these too often focus on outputs, such as the number of programs provided or clients served, rather than results, such as reduced recidivism or increased graduation rates, and are of limited use to policymakers. Governments should make sure that performance measurement systems collect and report essential outcome data for all major programs.

Develop meaningful outcome measures for programs, agencies, and the community

Performance monitoring systems should provide output and outcome data that meet the information needs of various stakeholders, including program administrators, policymakers, and constituents. For example:

- Administrators can monitor operations by using data on program outputs, such as the number of families served, the percentage of families achieving program milestones, and the caseloads of field staff.
- Agency leaders can use intermediate outcome data to assess progress toward key goals, such as reducing the percentage of participating mothers who deliver low-birth-weight babies.
- Policymakers and constituents can use measures that gauge long-term trends, such as the percentage of children graduating from high school, to determine whether public programs are achieving their overall objectives.

For example, Virginia Performs is an interactive, publicly available database that collects and reports performance data on a wide range of government functions at multiple levels—including program, agency, department, and cross-cutting strategic government priority—and for diverse audiences such as program administrators, agency leadership, policymakers, and the public. As part of Virginia's strategic planning process, state agencies identify performance measures, which are then tracked through the Virginia Performs system.³⁶ These data are one set of inputs used to generate the annual Virginia Report, a balanced accountability scorecard created by the bipartisan Council on Virginia's Future, which is headed by the governor.³⁷ Where data are available, Virginia's performance is compared with the national average, the top performing state in the nation, and three similar states. The data allow users to consider high-level strategic goals and a wide range of performance indicators at the department, agency, and program levels.

When determining what measures to track, governments can consult resources available from several national organizations. For example, in 2012, the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development launched the Healthy Communities Transformation Initiative to provide governments with the tools to assess the "physical, social, and economic roots of community health." The initiative's first deliverable, a collection of 28 key indicators that governments can use to track outcomes across 10 policy domains, was created following review of existing models and is now being tested in select jurisdictions. Many of the indicators can be derived from publicly available data and customized by state, municipality, or neighborhood.³⁸

Agencies can also visit the national clearinghouses to identify the outcomes predicted for various programs by rigorous research and use those findings to set performance targets for funded programs. Governments can require programs that lack strong evidence of effectiveness to develop theories of change or logic models that specify their expected results and can then use this information to establish outcome measures and performance targets for those programs.

Using 'Benchmarking' to Gauge Performance

Many governments are also using benchmarking—comparing their program outcomes with those achieved in other jurisdictions—as a way to assess performance. One example of this is the National Core Indicators project, which over the last decade has developed common sets of outcome measures, including some 60 indicators measuring personal, family, and health and safety, that states can use to gauge the effectiveness of the services they provide to developmentally disabled individuals. Currently, 40 states and the District of Columbia participate, with the remaining 10 expected to join by 2017.

Individual states have used the data to focus attention on problem areas. For example, policymakers in Kentucky found that employment of its adult-with-developmental-disabilities population trailed the national average substantially—18.5 percent compared with 37.8 percent.* At the same time, National Core Indicators data showed the importance of employment for improving quality of life, including better relationships, increased exercise, and greater participation in community activities. This information spurred a number of strategies in Kentucky to effect change: a revision of Medicaid waivers, an emphasis on employment in communications developed by state agencies, more staff training, and an increase in the hourly rate for supported employment.

* National Core Indicators Project, "NCI Adult Consumer Survey Outcomes: Kentucky Report 2011-2012 Data," <http://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/states/KY>.

Performance measures also should periodically be examined to ensure they still serve as reliable indicators of success. For contracted services, governments should ensure that providers collect and report common outcome metrics so that officials can compare performance and aggregate the overall program effects.

Conduct regular audits of systems for collecting and reporting performance data

Effective performance measurement systems should be user-friendly and provide data that meet the needs of multiple stakeholders. Even the best-designed system, however, will be of little value if the reported data are inaccurate or misleading. Governments should provide training to agency staff and contracted providers on how to collect, analyze, and report performance data, and develop processes for regularly verifying that these data are accurate.

Performance measurement systems can easily fall into disuse without strong leadership supporting them or adequate training for providers and agency personnel. In 2012, Louisiana's auditors confronted this issue during a review of the state's performance budgeting system, once considered a model program.³⁹ The audit noted that many statutory processes were no longer being followed and that reported information was not being used to inform budget decisions. The findings emphasized the need to increase awareness of the system, improve how performance data were presented to policymakers, and ensure reliability. The report also noted the importance of

training, for both legislative and agency staff, on using the system. "State agencies have all of this data but do not necessarily have the tools or the skill set to analyze the data and use it for performance management purposes," says Karen LeBlanc, performance audit manager at the Louisiana Legislative Auditor's office.

Regularly report performance data to policymakers

Performance data can be a valuable tool for managing, overseeing, and assessing the value of programs, but it is critical to provide the information to policymakers on a regular basis, in easy-to-digest formats that highlight key findings, and readily translate to budget and policy decision-making. Several state and local governments have developed report card systems that focus on agency or program performance on key outcomes. Report card data are often reported through public websites and may be presented to policymakers through regular hearings and meetings. Data dashboards, interactive business tools that display a set of performance indicators, can also be beneficial in tracking and focusing on high-level outcomes in real time.

In Michigan, for example, a frequently updated performance dashboard provides past and current data on a variety of indicators relevant to the administration's key policy objectives, including economic strength, health and education, quality of life, and public safety.⁴⁰ Policymakers and the public can quickly see which programs are succeeding or struggling based on simple graphics such as a green "thumbs up" for progress and a red "thumbs down" for a lack of achievement. For example, in spring 2014, third-grade reading test scores were slowly continuing to trend upward. The dashboard featured this information using a graph showing proficiency increasing from 63.5 percent in fiscal year 2011 to 70 percent three years later. On the other hand, the dashboard provided a warning signal that the self-reported percentage of students being bullied rose from 22.7 percent in 2011 to 25 percent in 2013.⁴¹

Targeted evaluation. Conduct rigorous evaluations of new and untested programs to ensure that they warrant continued funding

Programs with little or no evidence of effectiveness carry a higher risk of yielding poor outcomes. Governments should therefore direct evaluation resources to programs that lack rigorous outcome data, receive significant funding, or pose other risks in order to ensure they are delivering desired results and that further support is warranted.

Governments should also allocate funding for evaluation to limit the risk that investments are made in programs that do not work or that are less effective over time. Rather than assuming that programs can find money within existing budgets, governments should dedicate resources for this purpose once existing evaluation capacity and expertise have been maximized.

Leverage available resources to conduct evaluations

Almost all states have offices that conduct program evaluations and performance audits, and these can provide unbiased information to help policymakers assess program effectiveness. Governments should develop an inventory of their resources and dedicate at least a portion of them to conducting rigorous outcome evaluations.

For example, legislative audit and research offices can be a critical resource in conducting independent program evaluations, but historically much of their work has focused on assessing compliance and management issues rather than outcomes. Legislators can work with these offices as they set their research agendas to identify opportunities to dedicate a larger portion of their resources to determining whether programs are achieving desired results.

Target evaluations to high-priority programs

No government has the capacity to regularly evaluate all of its funded programs, so it is important to set priorities. Governments can develop a list of programs to be evaluated, weighing factors such as the program's purpose, existing evidence of effectiveness, spending level, potential for cost savings, and risk of poor outcomes.

Make better use of administrative data—information typically collected for operational and compliance purposes—to enhance program evaluations

Over the past decade, researchers have made significant advances in using existing data sources to conduct rigorous program evaluations, for example, linking education, child welfare, and juvenile and criminal justice records to determine child outcomes.⁴² Because much of this information is already collected for other administrative purposes, the costs are much lower than more traditional program evaluations.

For example, Hawaii's Opportunity Probation with Enforcement program, a supervision program for offenders at high risk for probation violation, was evaluated in a randomized controlled trial using existing administrative data sources. The state's existing probation case-management system included records on supervision activities, drug test results, offenses, and other probationer interactions with the criminal justice system, and the Criminal Justice Information System provided comprehensive criminal record data. By linking these data sources, the evaluation was able to determine that the program was effective in reducing recidivism. Participants were 55 percent less likely to be rearrested and 53 percent less likely to have their probation revoked compared with high-risk offenders who did not participate in the program.⁴³

Require evaluations as a condition for continued funding for new initiatives

Governments frequently operate small-scale programs as a way to test innovations before fully implementing them. When designing these programs, governments should specify the desired results to help managers and evaluators focus on specific objectives, and before financial support is renewed, outcome studies should be required to determine whether tested programs are effective.

In New York City, the Center for Economic Opportunity requires rigorous evaluations of all pilot programs to determine whether they were effective in achieving one or more of three primary goals: reducing poverty, encouraging savings, or empowering low-income workers to advance their careers. Center staff oversee monitoring and evaluation activities, working in partnership with city agencies and external research organizations. The center uses the results to help determine whether to expand or discontinue each program.⁴⁴

Develop a centralized repository for program evaluations

As noted earlier, several national research clearinghouses are reviewing studies to identify what works in public programming across policy areas. Governments can support these efforts by designating a central entity to house the studies they conduct and requiring all agencies to submit copies of outcome evaluations and performance audits. This agency or unit should screen the reports, identify significant outcome findings, and incorporate the information into a comprehensive list of local programs. Governments can also report these studies to the national research clearinghouses to help expand the available knowledge base and help governments across the country more effectively direct funding to programs that have demonstrated strong results for residents.